

Sunriver Angler's Fly Tying Corner

By: Phil Fischer



This winter has been unusually mild and snowpack has been extremely light in the Cascades. As a skier, I have been disappointed with the limited number of those great powder days that makes Mt. Bachelor such a wonderful destination. But there has been a silver lining. In Mid-March the Cascade Lakes highway opened from the South gate at Deschutes Bridge up to Elk Lakes. In our first year in Sunriver four years ago, the road didn't open until mid-June. As a fly fisherman, an early opening means access to some favorite lakes, and a significantly extended season. And while most of the Cascade lakes remain closed until the general trout season opener on April 25th, Hosmer Lake and Little Lava Lake are open year round and both have been ice free for weeks. It had been since mid-October that I had been able to fish Hosmer and I was more than anxious to get back up there fly fishing. With the road open, I decided to throw a float tube and a fly rod in my car and head up for a few hours of casting.

The early season features very limited bug activity. About the only active insects are midges, commonly known as Chironomids. In the mid-day sun these insects are active and a mild weather day can even bring some surface activity. But, for the most part, it is a subsurface game this time of year. In the past few weeks I have been tying up a variety of Chironomid patterns. I brought these flies with me with the intent of trying various patterns to determine if certain colors performed better than others.



The scene looking across Hosmer Lake up to Mt. Bachelor is spectacular. I launched my float tube at the main launch and was reminded quickly this was early season, and the water was cold! But fortunately the fishing was hot, and it overshadowed the cold water, for a while, anyhow. These early season trout had not seen flies cast at them for quite some time. They were very willing and took most every chironomid pattern I tried. I had the good fortune to get three legs of the Hosmer grand slam; a brook trout, a rainbow and cutthroat, missing only an Atlantic Salmon. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife began stocking rainbows and cutthroat trout in Hosmer a couple of years ago to replace the Atlantic Salmon, which are being discontinued. It is clear that this program is producing excellent results, as these early season fish were fat, feisty and very healthy.



I ran into a few other fly fisherman, including several Sunriver Angler members. I snapped this picture postcard of Mike and Rynie Quan. Mike hooked and landed a beautiful fish with Mt. Bachelor framing the scene perfectly.



For this month's column, rather than choosing a specific pattern, I chose to put forth a menu of ideas for tying up Chironomid patterns. Chironomids are amongst the easiest of patterns to tie and are a great starter pattern for beginners. I recently bought some Alec Jackson Crystal Chironomid hooks. They are a curved hook and are a good option. But any curved hook, like a scud hook or similar will suffice. I look for a wide gape and very sharp point, which translates to better hooking qualities. I generally use painted brass

beads. But in shallower water situations I will use glass beads and in deeper water tungsten beads. For the abdomen of the fly, I like to use thread that is much heavier than we typically use for tying trout flies. It helps save a lot of time in layering the hook and building up the body of the fly. I generally target 210 denier for the base layer, and 70 denier for ribbing or top layers on the fly. For hook sizes I will go as large as size 10's and as small as size 18's. My eyes are not quite as strong as they once were, so I very rarely tie tiny flies anymore! I have also been using a UV quick cure resin recently on almost all of my Chironomid patterns. It makes the fly realistic and very durable. Take a look at the picture at the beginning of the article and it will give you an idea of some of the patterns I fished at Hosmer recently.

Chironomid Pattern Ideas:

Hook: Curved Daiichi Alec Jackson Crystal Chironomid hook in sizes 11-13, Daiichi 1260 or similar in sizes 12-16, or any scud hook like a Tiemco 2457 in sizes 12-18.

Bead: White, sized to match hook size. Also try slate, silver and gold colored beads, or glass beads in various colors like red, amber, gunmetal, etc.

Thread: Red, Black, Olive, Gray, Brown, Amber or Tan in 210 denier.

Tag: Krystal Flash in Olive or Red

Ribbing: Fine wire in gold, silver or copper. Flashabou, Krystal Flash, or similar flash materials in red, olive, rust and clear.

Thorax: Peacock, or ostrich in darker colors such as browns and blacks. Or permanent markers to darken a thread base on the thorax.

Over Body: Liquid Lace or a quick cure UV resin, such as Clear Cure Goo.

Tying Instructions:

1. Place the bead on the hook. Tie in ribbing material.
2. Wind a tag of Krystal Flash or similar at the butt of the fly.
3. Wind several layers of 210 denier thread in your chosen color. Build a tapered abdomen getting progressively thicker toward the bead.
4. Rib the fly with wire, Flashabou or other ribbing.
5. Wind several wraps of peacock to form a very sparse thorax behind the bead. Or darken the thorax with a Sharpie permanent marker applied to the thread wraps.
6. Coat the fly with UV Resin and cure it with a UV Light as recommended by the manufacturer.

Experiment and develop your own favorite Chironomid color combination. If you have questions or would like additional information about Chironomid patterns, please don't

hesitate to email me. Or if you have suggestions on future patterns to feature in this column, I welcome your input. I can be reached at Philfischer@sbcglobal.net.